

How a 'Blessing Box' Shattered an Atmosphere of Death and Depression

Within two weeks of being diagnosed with breast cancer, I was scheduled for chemotherapy. The night before I went in for my first treatment, some precious women showed up at my house with a gift: a beautiful, ornate box they called a blessing box.

Several people who loved me had prepared a variety of special surprises and encouraging notes, which they'd placed in this box. The women who gave me this gift asked me to wait until I was in the chemo room to open it.

The next morning, accompanied by a dear friend and clutching my blessing box, I trembled as my doctor led me to the chemo room. This was a frightening place, where death seemed to lurk in every corner. I didn't know what to expect. To be honest, I was more afraid of what I would find in the chair beside me than what was about to drip into my veins. What if people were unkind? What if they shared things that might frighten me? What if how sick they were compromised my own faith in healing? I was not sure I was strong enough to get through this experience.

I sat down and the nurse hooked me up. When I was settled, my friend suggested I open the blessing box. With shaking fingers, I removed the lid. Inside I found bracelets, lip gloss, passages of Scripture written on pretty paper, prophetic words, worship music—all kinds of things which spoke life to me. Many women, with much love, had drawn together and contributed what they could to encourage me and give me hope. Looking through the items, I laughed. I wept.

I soon realized my friend and I had the attention of other

people in the room. Everyone around me seemed to need the same encouragement I did. So we started passing the blessing box around and sharing it with the other patients. As my blessing box traveled across the room, others laughed and talked. The atmosphere of death and depression lifted as people shared in this special gift. My friends who initiated to bless me had initiated an overflow of love and joy.

Those same faithful friends prepared more blessing boxes for my second and third rounds of chemotherapy. Some of the notes of encouragement came from women I didn't know. People took time to do something special for me even though I had never done anything like that for them.

My friends reminded me of the spiritual principle of reaping and sowing. For years I have been a sower of encouragement in the lives of many women. It has been my joy to invest in a multitude of friends. I have planted many seeds in the lives of others. And in the moment of my need, the bread I'd cast upon the waters came back to me a hundredfold (Eccl. 11:1) I had a harvest of relationships, love, and support.

The ministry of those blessing boxes multiplied. Others caught the vision and started putting together blessing boxes to encourage some people. What was meant to bless one individual multiplied and produced a harvest large enough to feed many.

Many women prayed for me, surrounded me, and carried me in the early days of my cancer treatments. I believe those who interceded for me helped save my life. My community, my family, my sisters all stood in the gap and ministered to me. It was like catching a glimpse of that vision again. I experienced a group of women with every gift and fruit of the Holy Spirit, joyfully using their gifts to bless me.

Do not underestimate the power of encouragement, love and life giving. The simplest things say, "I love you. I care." And you never know when you will be in a position to receive what you

have sown.

God is calling us to rise above our personal agendas, fears and wounds, and draw near to one another in a way that synergizes our individual callings. Those of us who have been walking longer should lead the way. If we pull together, sow together and reap together, we will set in motion a revolution of love and peace which will change the generations that follow us. Our daughters and granddaughters will walk stronger and whole, free of our past, empowered to bring hope and healing to others.

✖ *Adapted from Women at War—Declaring a Cease-Fire on Toxic Female Relationships by Jan Greenwood, copyright 2015, by Gateway Create Publishers. The author serves as a pastor of women and brings her experience and insight into this book to help women value each other, turn difficult relationships into powerful ones, and embrace the gift of being a woman. To order your copy click here.*

Prayer Power for the Week of June 26, 2016

This week embrace the gift of being a woman and ask the Lord to do a deep work in your heart, heal any wounds you've experienced, and restore any broken relationships He wants mended. Thank Him for His emotional, spiritual and physical healing, and pray that He would open doors of ministry for you to share His overcoming power with others. Continue to pray for the nation and our upcoming elections and ask for godly leaders to fill government vacancies. Pray that revival will ignite in our churches and spread around the globe (Eccl. 11:1; 1 Thess. 5:16-18). {eoa}